Approved For Release 2000/05/24 : CIA-RDP75-00001R000100040056-2

Commonweal
21 April 1972

FOIAb3b

[redacted]

LABOR'S ESTABLISHMENT

STOP THE WORLD . .

CPYRGHT

When the aging president-emeritus of the Garment Workers, David Dubinsky, voted "present" on the question before the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO at one of its concluding morning sessions at Bal Harbour, Florida, last month, he might well have experienced one of those flashbacks into his career—one which contains myriad interlocking roles in the history of American labor, social democracy and left-wing political fratricide.

The question involved concurrence with the recommendations of the AFL-CIO's Department of International Relations, headed by Jay Lovestone, which called for total and unconditional withdrawal by the American labor body from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Accompanying the call for concurrence without dissent was a vituperative attack by George Meany on the world labor organization, which claims 64 million affiliate members in 94 non-Communist countries.

Only goateed Jack Potofsky of the Clothing Workers abstained. As always, George Meany got what he wanted without a dissenting vote, and by virtual fiat the spokesmen for the mainstream of American labor announced that they had decided to stop the world so they could get off. Almost incredibly, at a time when even the administration of Richard Nixon had declared that it was ready to end the era of confrontation to begin the era of negotiations, an important sector of the liberal democratic community in the United States declared itself for an unreconstructed and strident anti-Communism.

Dubinsky, knowing all this, must have reflected upon the ironic twists of history, for in many ways it was he, Meany and Lovestone who created the ICFTU 20 years previous as a vehicle of fighting Communism in the trade unions at home and abroad—as well as being a valuable instrument of Marshall Plan foreign policy. More ironic, perhaps, was the other undisputed footnote in labor history—that the Garment Workers' chief more than any other person was responsible for the success and present influence of both Meany and Lovestone.

Few would have thought that when Dubinsky brought them together in 1941 two men with such outwardly clashing backgrounds would within three decades come to hold virtual veto power over important aspects of American domestic and foreign policy. Meany epitomized the "responsible" trade union leader: a strong advocate of the virtues of free enterprise, pragmatic, honest, staunch and an uncompromising anti-Communist, cigar-chewing and a man to put at ease any meeting of employers with his famous declaration that he had never personally been in a strike or walked a picket line (a boast he could still make 28 years later). He was recognized as a real comer among union executives.

Lovestone, on the other hand, had only recently emerged from the subterranean labyrinth of American Communism and radicalism between the two World Wars. There was a time, just prior to the 1929 crash, when he had actually been the head of the C.P. in the United States. He participated in the intrigue and character assassinations that were common to the Trotsky-Stalin warfare within international Communism, and in a harrowing experience which might have been written by Ian Fleming, Lovestone was forcibly held in Moscow while Comintern agents proceeded to destroy his following of American C.P. cadres, and he was accordingly excommunicated from both leadership and membership. Undaunted, he formed his own Communist party in opposition and with other familiar names who were to make careers of their ex-Communism, such as Benjamin Gitlow, Bertram Mandel and Bertram Wolfe, continued to hold meetings and issue manifestos in the telephone booths of New York, Chicago and Detroit for the next decade.

When Dubinsky discovered Lovestone, there was a market for informed veterans of the left who knew the tactics and ideology of fighting the left, both Communist and non-Communist. The unlikely joining of the careers of Meany and Lovestone, who by then had become head of the Garment Workers' international affairs department, was consummated. From that time, the doctrine of anti-Communism and the foreign posture of the American Federation of Labor became one and the same. With little difficulty it became also the policy of the merged AFL-CIO after 1955. Jay Lovestone, who all through these years remained as the single most important consular to Meany, retained the enigmatic role he had played both within and without mainline American Communism, participating in top-level decisions, always present yet rarely seen or photographed. Interestingly enough, there is no record of his public repudiation of Communism or his embracing Meany's thing—partnership capitalism between government, business and labor.

In 1949 the Soviet presence in Europe was a real threat to not only the post-war governments of the West but the non-Communist trade unions of France and Italy. General strikes and the prospect of a revival of the Popular Front in France alarmed the U.S. It was a time for cold warfare and matching the Communists at their own game, and so enters—Jay Lovestone, of course.

Thomas W. Braden, then Allen Dulles' deputy director in the Central Intelligence Agency, would later write that Lovestone had "an enormous grasp of foreign intel-

continued